



FRATERNITÀ DI
COMUNIONE E LIBERAZIONE

FRATERNITY OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION

ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULT PERSONS

INTRODUCTION

The certainty that Christ is present in our lives and in His Church here and now, no matter the historical and cultural situations to which we are called, makes it possible for us to face with a healthy realism and humble candor, even though full of pain and shame, the acts of sexual abuse that have been committed by members of the Church.

The terrible wave of evil that has drawn even Christian communities into scandal has gravely wounded the psychological and physical well-being of persons and planted rotten seeds of doubt regarding the method God chooses to communicate Himself to humanity. Also threatened is our very capacity to communicate the faith, that “precious good” for which a balanced canon law must be able to provide adequate “legal protection” (cf. BENEDICT XVI, “La Chiesa e lo scandalo degli abusi sessuali” [“The Church and the Scandal of Sexual Abuse”], in POPE FRANCIS and BENEDICT XVI, *Non fate male a uno solo di questi piccoli: La voce di Pietro contro la pedofilia* [Do not cause one of these little ones harm: the voice of Peter speaks out against pedophilia], Libreria Editrice Vaticana – Cantagalli, Vatican City-Siena, 2019, pp. 46-47).

The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, therefore, takes up the urgent concern of the Holy Father and entire Church that those situations which have inflicted “*deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also on their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike*” not only be “*prevented from happening, but also*” be addressed by a culture that “*prevents the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated*” (FRANCIS, *Letter to the People of God*, 20 August 2018).

To that end, and in compliance with the associated requirements set out by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, the Fraternity has adopted this Policy, after a three-year *ad experimentum* period from 2020 to 2022.

This Policy has been created with suitable flexibility to allow for training and preventive and precautionary measures adapted to the various environments and cultural and historical circumstances in which members of Communion and Liberation are called to live their Christian vocation. At the same time, its provisions must be understood as part of an effort of subsidiarity, in that they do not replace related protocols created in the various countries where Communion and Liberation is present, in accordance with requests of their respective ecclesiastical authorities; they rather offer themselves as a point of comparison so that such protocols might be congruent with the nature of the experience and unique identity of Communion and Liberation, and as a support for smaller communities that still lack similar instruments.

In any case, fully consistent with its nature as a universal association of pontifical right, and as such, completely lacking in any jurisdictional power, the Fraternity, in accordance with Art. 3 of its Statute, in no way intends to exceed its competence in gathering evidence or in making decisions, as set out in detail in the name of the successors of the Apostles in the *Motu Proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi* issued on March 25, 2003 (hereinafter *Vos estis*).

Rather, it is intended that it will outline a full collaboration with them through ongoing training of its members, prevention at all levels of community life, prompt communication of any reports of abuse that may arise, and will offer accompaniment and treatment for those involved in any way in abuse.



With this in mind, this Policy is presented as part of an active collaboration with the various diocesan offices and with the interdiocesan and national offices of the individual Bishops' Conferences, not only as concerns investigations and trials with respect to individual cases and reference of these cases to the competent Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, but also as concerns participation in training and prevention programs as well as programs for treatment and healing offered by local Churches.

The following, then, is stipulated with the full awareness that “*a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church,*” and with the humble conviction that “*this becomes possible only with the grace of the Holy Spirit (...), as we must always keep in mind the words of Jesus: ‘Apart from me you can do nothing’*” (FRANCIS, *Vos estis lux mundi*, Introduction).

NATURE AND SCOPE OF APPLICATION

ART. 1

The norms described below apply to all the faithful involved in the educational activities and apostolates of Communion and Liberation in which minors or their equivalents or vulnerable adults participate or are expected to participate.

“Equivalent to a minor” is a person who habitually has imperfect use of reason. “Vulnerable adult” means any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence.

The provisions set forth in this Policy aim at protecting the human and baptismal dignity of all those who participate in the activities mentioned above, in particular the youngest and weakest, through prevention and training programs related to sexual abuse, a clear reporting process for any kind of inappropriate behavior, and proposals for accompaniment to care for anyone who may have suffered any violation in one of the environments described in the first paragraph of this Article.

ART. 2

The present Policy concerns conducts set forth in Art. 1, § 1, a) and b) in *Vos estis*, imputable to the subjects referred to in the same article in conjunction with can. 1398 § 2 CIC¹.

¹ Art. 1, § 1, a) and b) in *Vos Estis* states as follows: “These norms apply to reports regarding clerics or members of Institutes of Consecrated Life or Societies of Apostolic Life and Moderators of international associations of the faithful recognized or erected by the Apostolic See concerning:

a) * a delict against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed through violence or threat or through abuse of authority, or by forcing someone to perform or submit to sexual acts;

** a delict against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed with a minor or with a person who habitually has imperfect use of reason or with a vulnerable adult;

*** the immoral acquisition, possession, exhibition or distribution, in any way or by any means, of pornographic images of minors or of persons who habitually have imperfect use of reason;

**** the recruitment or inducement of a minor or of a person who habitually has imperfect use of reason or of a vulnerable adult to pose in a pornographic manner or to participate in real or simulated pornographic exhibitions;

b) conduct carried out by the subjects referred to in art. 6, consisting of actions or omissions intended to interfere with or avoid civil investigations or canonical investigations, whether administrative or penal, against one of the subjects indicated in § 1 regarding the delicts referred to in letter a) of this paragraph.”



For the definitions of “minor,” “vulnerable adult,” and “child pornography,” see § 2 of Art. 1 in *Vos estis*.

ART. 3

Communion and Liberation firmly condemns any conduct that is not in keeping with Art. 16 below, hereinafter referred to as “inappropriate conduct.”

ART. 4

The relevant educational activities aimed at middle-school-aged youth (or their equivalents abroad), conducted under various names and in various locations, include:

- a) A beginning day and concluding day for each year that are aligned with the beginning and end of the school year, respectively. These involve day trips organized by the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles, and are characterized by a proposal of age-appropriate Christian friendship that typically involves outdoor games, visits to sites significant for their history or beauty, and the celebration of Mass.
- b) Regular meetings of varying frequency (from weekly to monthly) guided by the adults described above at letter a), intended as moments of recreation dedicated to games and conversation for the purpose of cultivating familiarity with Jesus Christ.
- c) “Promise,” an annual two-day trip, usually to a significant Christian landmark that can be easily reached by the participating groups from different locations, during which students promise or renew their promise to be faithful to their friendship with Jesus under the guidance and protection of a saint selected by each individual participant.
- d) Summer vacations: a short period of vacation in a place, preferably in the mountains, with lodgings featuring decent rooms and facilities that provide the highest possible amount of discretion for each person’s privacy and respects the separation of genders and of different age groups. These are privileged times to share free time together with games, singing, hikes, witnesses by those who live notable examples of Christian life, and common prayer, all under the responsible guidance of the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles.
- e) Other educational or recreational activities under the responsible guidance of the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles.

ART. 5

Youth in high school (or their equivalents abroad) are offered the possibility of participating in the educational path of *Gioventù Studentesca* (“GS”), which is marked by the following proposals:

Can. 1398 § 2 CIC states as follows: “A member of an institute of consecrated life or of a society of apostolic life, or any one of the faithful who enjoys a dignity or performs an office or function in the Church, who commits an offence mentioned in § 1 or in can. 1395 § 3 is to be punished according to the provision of can. 1336 §§ 2-4, with the addition of other penalties according to the gravity of the offence.”



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- a) A beginning day and concluding day for each year that are aligned with the beginning and end of the school year, respectively, and are characterized by shared time for recreation and conversations in assemblies, and concludes with the celebration of Mass.
- b) Regular meetings of varying frequency (from weekly to monthly) called the “radius,” guided by the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles. These meetings are moments of assembly, which begin with communal singing and end with common prayer. They are dedicated to the verification of the relevance of the Christian encounter to the needs of daily life in the environments of school and home and with friends, the realities where the human and Christian growth of young people is played out.
- c) Easter Triduum: a retreat taking place on the days representing the culmination of the liturgical year, from Holy Thursday to Holy Saturday, in which young people, accompanied by the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles, participate in a meditation on the Lord’s Passion, death, and resurrection, led by an assigned priest, with a celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper and a Way of the Cross, personal and communal time for silence, and an assembly for the purpose of sharing experiences gained from participating in the gesture.
- d) Winter/Summer vacations: a short period of vacation in a place, preferably in the mountains, in lodgings featuring decent rooms and facilities that provide the highest possible amount of discretion for each person’s privacy, respecting the separation of genders and of different age groups. These are privileged times to share free time together, with games, singing, hikes, significant witnesses to Christian life, and common prayer, all under the responsible guidance of the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles.
- e) Charitable work: a regular gesture to educate about the importance of charity, taking place under the responsible guidance of the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles, which requires the faithful commitment of one’s free time without compromising one’s studies or taking away from time with family, to share with those in situations of need or poverty, as they arise, in the various places where GS is present.
- f) Other educational or recreational activities under the responsible guidance of the adults described in Art. 11 and following articles.

ART. 6

The educational path of adults in Communion and Liberation is marked by the following communal events:

- a) School of Community: a catechesis based on texts by Fr. Giussani, it is the Movement’s primary educational tool to develop one’s awareness and affection within the experience of having encountered the charism. It consists of a weekly/biweekly meeting freely convened by a group of people, usually set in a public place or workplace.
- b) Beginning Day: a gathering that includes an introductory reflection on the path to be followed during the course of the social year, concluding with a celebration of the Mass.



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- c) Spiritual Exercises: a three-day retreat dedicated to communal prayer including the Liturgy of the Hours, listening to meditations proposed by the President of the Fraternity or a priest he delegates, daily Mass, individual and communal times for silence, and a time of assembly to share questions and experiences inspired by participation in the gesture.
- d) Winter/Summer vacations: short recreational holidays as a community, preferably in the mountains, dedicated to reviewing the course of human education taking place over the year in a context of hikes, games, conversations, and witnesses in a fraternal environment, supported by the pillars of common prayer and daily Mass. The vacations are organized by the free initiative of adults involved in guiding the many different communities throughout the world, and involve an equally free participation of adults interested in such a recreational experience.
- e) Charitable work: a regular gesture to educate about the importance of charity, which requires the faithful commitment of one's free time without compromising the serious responsibilities of one's profession or particular state of life, to share with those in situations of need or poverty, as these situations arise, including as the result of a request or notification from ecclesiastical authorities, in the various places where Communion and Liberation is present.
- f) Other educational or recreational activities that may arise.

ART. 7

Subject to the protections of religious freedom, no minor or equivalent person, however great his or her personal desire to participate, will be admitted to the gestures and events referred to in Art. 4 and Art. 5, c) and d), without the prior express consent of his or her parents or guardians with the submission of accompanying permission forms.

ART. 8

Maximum attention is to be paid to the protection of vulnerable adults during their participation in the gestures referred to in Arts. 4, 5, and 6 above.

Beginning with registration for gathering events, an adequate and effective coordination will be arranged between the organizers of said events and those participating who are in a state of vulnerability, or their legal guardians.

Any inappropriate conduct will be reported pursuant to Art. 26 below.

ART. 9

Minors and their equivalents involved from time to time in educational, pastoral, and/or recreational activities intended for adults shall receive the utmost respect and dedicated attention.

Though parents or guardians remain responsible for the physical and moral integrity of the minors and their equivalents they involve in such activities, proper and irreproachable behavior is required of all participating adults, in accordance with Art. 16 of this Policy.

Any inappropriate conduct will be reported pursuant to Art. 26 below.



ART. 10

With regards to the acquisition of photographic, audio, or video materials during the aforementioned activities, and the diffusion of such, Communion and Liberation scrupulously and integrally adheres to all of the provisions in force in the Italian legal system and to other civil laws in those circumstances set forth in Art. 18, paragraph 2 below.

PREVENTION

ART. 11

The protection of minors, of their equivalents and of vulnerable adults is a constituent part of the educational and formative proposal of Communion and Liberation. It concerns not only those involved in the aforementioned activities, but all members, who are called, on the one hand, to maintain a lifestyle and personal relationships that are beyond reproach, and on the other, to actively commit to preventing abuse, raising awareness, and spreading a culture characterized by respect and care for the weakest persons.

Those in leadership roles in the activities dedicated to minors referred to in Arts. 4 and 5 above must, in addition to expressing a sincere educational passion evidenced at the professional and vocational level, offer a clear witness of psychological balance and emotional maturity, as well as embody a sincere dedication to and proven fidelity in following the path of Communion and Liberation.

For all involved individuals, Communion and Liberation requires an adequate signed certification of the absence of any criminal convictions or unresolved charges to the detriment of minors, their equivalents and vulnerable adults.

Clerics or religious must inform the legitimate ordinary and/or their superior.

ART. 12

Those responsible at any level in the above-mentioned activities may avail themselves of collaborators commensurate with the educational commitment undertaken and considering the number of students involved and the scale of the communal gestures proposed.

The assessment of the suitability of those collaborators is the responsibility of the leaders of the activities, who are to make their decisions following scrupulously the criteria in Art. 11, paragraph 2 above.

ART. 13

The involvement of minors – who will not, in any case, be under the age of 14 – in charitable activities serving children or vulnerable adult persons may only take place only under the guidance of a responsible adult.



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ART. 14

Responsibility for any inappropriate conduct which, despite careful vigilance on the part of the leaders and adults, should take place during the gestures referred to in Arts. 4, 5, and 6 above, as part of interactions with other persons involved de facto in the educational activities (personnel at the place of lodging, transportation staff, technical support personnel, etc.) will be subject to the relevant state provisions.

ART. 15

All persons involved in the activities referred to in Art. 1, including minors referred to in Art. 13, must willingly participate in training courses and in any updates to those courses offered at the diocesan level for the prevention and recognition of sexual abuse, and must provide adequate proof of attendance to the leaders of activities.

ART. 16

All adults described in Art. 11 and following articles above cultivate in the educational relationship a deep respect for the freedom of conscience of the young people entrusted to their care and a highly sensitive concern for the protection of their personal privacy.

Vigilance is advised in the use of language, which ought to always be respectful, seeking for and emphasizing all that is beautiful, noble, and pure, no matter the means of communication chosen, and with special attention to social media use.

The utmost discretion in physical gestures is also required. In these gestures, adults should never exceed the limits of a cordial friendship that is always openly shared with other adults and other young people present.

To this end, self-referential attitudes and personalistic bonds that might generate misunderstandings and inhibit a healthy relational dynamic both at the educational level and in friendships among peers, must be avoided.

REPORTING

THE COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULT PERSONS OF THE FRATERNITY OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION

ART. 17

This document establishes the Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adult Persons of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation (the “Commission”).

The Commission is to be comprised of five members chosen by the Central Diaconia of the Fraternity (the “Diaconia”). They will be professionals who have no formal role in leading Communion and Liberation and who are highly qualified in one of the following fields:



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medicine/psychiatry, psychotherapy, education, law, or theology/pastoral care. The coordinator of the Commission is to be named by the members of the Commission.

The assignment conferred on each member for a three-year period is renewable at the discretion of the Diaconia after reasoned deliberation at the end of this period.

In the event of resignation or inability to continue in office, the Diaconia shall supply the Commission with a professional from one of the above fields to fill the vacancy. In case of emergency, the new member may be appointed by the President of the Fraternity and subsequently submitted for confirmation or replacement on the occasion of the next meeting of the Diaconia.

ART. 18

The Commission thus composed shall perform the functions described in the articles below related to all of the pastoral activities of Communion and Liberation present in Italy.

It will be responsible, respecting the principle of subsidiarity, for those issues within its competence that may emerge in communities outside Italy, in the absence of a local commission and/or in the absence of or anticipation of specific protocols issued by the pertinent Bishops' Conferences. In such cases, the Commission will help communities to comply with the indications of the territorial ecclesiastical authority as soon as such are made known, or will continue to provide appropriate support in those situations where, due to the small size of the community or other sound reasons, it is not possible to have dedicated instruments to address such situations.

ART. 19

The Commission will perform the following functions:

- a) receive and assess reports of abuse as described in Art. 20;
- b) listen to any persons involved, providing information on paths for treatment or healing, using the timeline and methods referred to in Art. 24;
- c) inform the President of the Fraternity of any abuse or alleged inappropriate conduct so that he may take any necessary actions;
- d) submit any reports of abuse to the competent ecclesiastical authorities as described in Art. 20.
- e) when necessary, report any serious and urgent cases for the protection of minors to the civil authorities.

The Commission will maintain absolute discretion with respect to any information acquired within its competency and individual offices, protecting the image and personal lives of the persons involved by any necessary means, including through careful protection of personal information.

ART. 20

Reports of conduct referred to in Art. 1 of *Vos estis* taking place as part of the activities referred to in Arts. 4, 5, and 6 above should be promptly forwarded to the Commission by those who were in any way involved or who have become aware of it.

The members of the Commission are to listen with great attention and loving care to those involved in matters relating to their competence. In the event that minors, their equivalents or vulnerable



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adults approach the Commission directly, the members will take care to listen to them with appropriately increased caution.

The Commission is responsible for assessing, within a reasonable period of time, the content of statements addressed to it that relate to activities referred to in Arts. 4, 5, and 6 above.

Reports must, in all cases, contain sufficiently precise information about the time and place of the alleged occurrences, the persons involved or informed, and any other circumstances that may be useful for ensuring an accurate assessment of whether the report is manifestly unfounded.

Reports of abuse received by the President of the Fraternity or by any leader of Communion and Liberation will be forwarded to the Commission. Reports of abuse committed outside of Italy will be forwarded by the Commission to the relevant commission in the country concerned. In the absence of a local commission, such reports will be directly handled by the Commission.

The Commission will not accept anonymous reports, rumors, or denunciations for which the reporting person does not assume responsibility by providing a signed report, except in cases of real and imminent danger to a minor, to a person considered equivalent to a minor, or to a vulnerable adult.

In any case, also taking into account the seriousness of the case, the Commission can immediately call on the person who made the report to turn to the competent local Ordinary and/or civil authority.

Art. 21

In response to a report which is not manifestly unfounded, the Commission will invite the person(s) who made the report to present it to the competent Ordinary and/or civil authority.

At the same time, it will inform the leader of the activity in which the alleged conduct occurred and the President of the Fraternity so that they may take the precautionary measures referred to in Art. 23, paragraph 1 below.

Art. 22

If the persons who made a report which is not manifestly unfounded are reluctant to present it to the competent authority, within 15 days of receipt of their refusal, which must be based on reasonable grounds with an authentic signature, the Commission will delegate one of its members to refer the case to the competent ecclesiastical authority, offering it all the information in its possession, with a view toward achieving the necessary verification of credibility.

Art. 23

The leader of an activity who is informed of a report under Art. 21, paragraph 2, shall in every case, in collaboration with the President of the Fraternity, suspend the named individual from any responsibility as a precautionary measure until the matter has been decided by the competent authority, though always preserving a presumption of innocence.



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The President of the Fraternity, in conjunction with the Central Diaconia, reserves the right to apply Arts. 35 and 36 of the Fraternity Statute, related to the expulsion of members for unworthy conduct.

Art. 24

Once the matter has been referred to the competent authority, the Commission shall offer, with absolute respect for the persons involved and complete confidentiality regarding the facts in question, information on possible courses for treatment and healing at the medical, psychopedagogical, and spiritual levels in addition to legal advice.

FINAL AND TEMPORARY PROVISIONS

ART. 25

With respect to violations referred to in Art. 1 of *Vos estis* that involve members of Communion and Liberation outside the context of the activities described in Arts. 4, 5, and 6 above, according to canon law and/or civil law at the unilateral and/or bilateral level, according to the requirements of the individual case, those who become aware of them should submit a report, if necessary, to the competent local Ordinary and/or civil authorities.

In circumstances in which evidence attests to the proven unworthiness of any of its members, the Fraternity will apply the provisions of Arts. 35 and 36 of its current Statute.

ART. 26

In the event of inappropriate conduct in the educational environments referred to in Arts. 4, 5, and 6 above, those who become aware of it are responsible for alerting the leaders of the activities in the context of which it took place.

In response, the leaders of the educational environment concerned, having ascertained such events, will call on those involved to immediately correct the behavior in question.

Repetition of inappropriate conduct shall result in a precautionary suspension from all responsibility and, where appropriate, definitive removal from any role.

Art. 27

Adequate publicity shall be given to this Policy through communication on the international websites of Communion and Liberation and in general announcements addressed to communities throughout the world. The same channels will be used to inform members of the documents related to this Policy (e.g., the signed certification form – cf. Art. 11, paragraph 3 – and *Vos estis*) and of how to contact the Commission.



Art. 28

The application of this Policy, and in particular the activities of the Commission referred to in Art. 17 and following articles, involve the processing of personal data by the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation Association as the Data Controller.

The personal data processed may include data belonging to particular categories and data referring to criminal convictions or crimes, the latter collected solely through the signed certification.

The processing of data is necessary for the protection of the vital interests of the persons protected by the Policy and for the pursuit of the legitimate interest of the Data Controller in protecting the fundamental interests of minors and vulnerable adult persons who have been affected by behaviors or situations caused by persons belonging to or related to the Fraternity, or necessary for its sphere of activity, and to fulfill specific indications received concerning these issues from ecclesiastical authorities.

If it is possible and compatible with the above purposes, the informed consent of the subject of the data will be obtained. The processing of personal data will take place in accordance with the provisions of Reg. (EU) 2016/679 and with the Italian primary and secondary legislation in force.

ART. 29

The present Policy shall come into effect on 1 September 2023.